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Air Mail

Mr. + Mrs. Charles E. Loops
5418 - 13th St., N. W.
Washington, D. C.
U. S. A.

Censored by:
F W Loops, 2nd Lt. A.C.

Saturday
April 24 (I think)

Hello Folks -

We've been here 2 days now - so as most of the work on the plane is done, maybe I can sneak off and at last start a real letter! - (Start one, I said!)

It's quite a busy job, flying and then doing all your maintenance yourselves - as we keep going east we lose more + more daylight hours on the evening end of the day - and have to get up correspondingly earlier the next morning to get an early start - it soon gets a fellow down under a steady pace - bed sure feels good - but the time spent there never is long enough! This is our second stop in Brazil and the first place we've had maintenance crews to work on the ship - even so it's confining, cause we want to be "Johnny on the spot" and see that it's all done properly. ~~[illegible]~~ and also there are always lots of odd jobs to be done. When working around inside the ship - as big as it is, we wish the darn thing were bigger - honestly we've so much junk packed that if you move one thing, chances are you've locked your foot

in some position, and you have to move 3 other things to free your foot!

For the past three hops we've been messing around what the meteorologists call the "Equatorial Front" but what the old sea captains used to call the "Doldrums". Believe me - it may be doldrums on the surface - but ain't in the air at flying altitudes! - Some times we climb as high as we can and still hit heavy thunderstorms, and sometimes we skim the tree tops and hit them. - Other times we just get an altitude and stay right at the same level and barge on thru! You might as well, 'cause you'll hit the heavy stuff anyway. The day we crossed over the Amazon River, we weren't sure we were crossing over it or thru it! - Only once or twice could we see the river beneath us, and incidentally, you just think you've seen wide rivers! We must have been averaging a ground speed of 180 at least and it seems we were over the river for 15 min. anyhow!

Shortly after crossing the river - we crossed the equator and hit another storm! I guess that was old man King Neptune's way of christening us! - I was sorta disappointed at the equator - there isn't any line at all marking it, like all the maps show! - Why

I would never have even known it if I hadn't asked our navigator, beforehand, to let me know it! - That just shows you, never trust a map explicitly!

Incidentally, we passed over a bit of jungle, - Man, oh, man, - there are places where for hours + hours we saw no indications of "man's hand" - if we had gone down in that stuff we sure would have been there for "duration plus"! I even caught myself feeling on the back of my parachute to see if my "jungle kit" were still there! I can't imagine one man ever getting out of such dense growth - Think I would have just made my home on the spot and either waited for someone to come get me - or go "native" - I always liked zoo's anyhow! I've flown over real forests back in the states, but none ~~were~~ ever so dense that nowhere could you not even see a trace of the actual ground, itself - but here, whew! -

At our last stop, native Brazilians gased our planes, "a la primitive", using "chamois skins" to strain the gas in - and they sold the fellows all sorts of monkeys + puppies for pets, - only thing, tho, some of the natives must have sneaked in during the night and stole some of the monkeys back, cause next day - lots of 'em were shy!

Quite a profitable game!

I've had lots of fun here in Brazil. - I've been talking Spanish (Brazilians speak Portuguese) and every time, I've gotten what I wanted! I've forgotten a lot, tho, but using it is bringing it back to me. The enlisted men just stand and gawk at me when I speak to the men gasing the plane. - They don't know what to think cause they know I must be talking to 'em or else they wouldn't do the things I want done! And in eating my Spanish has been quite handy. While we've eaten in "Officer's Mess" each place - the help is usually native and so that's where I come in! - Take last night for example: - I kept asking the waiter to bring me some coffee - in English - and he would keep nodding his head and repeating "café"! Well - after three or four times of this, I started getting tired - so the next time he came by - I raised my cup - and in Spanish - I asked him why in the devil didn't he bring me coffee - (looking very mean all the while!). He gave a start - looked at me again - turned

around and promptly returned with a whole pot of coffee (that's the way they serve it to us)! Everyone else at the table asked me what the heck I'd said to make him change so suddenly! - It's a sorta game.

Since we've been in Brazil, we also get quite a bit of hot chocolate at the meals. It's served prepared, in rather large pots - one to a table - and it's good, too. - When you drink it all up, they bring you more. On each table is a big bowl of fruit also - native local fruit. - Some of it is pretty good - but some pretty bad, too. - About the only kind I can recognize are the bananas! - And even they are different! The bananas we eat are green in color, but ripe! - If you pick around and get one thats a little yellow, like you're accustomed to, - you'll find they're much too ripe to eat. - I give up!

On this post, too, as on those others we've hit - the fellows are really well cared for - and the spirit seems to be high. In fact, - I could name worse posts right

in the U. S. A. that are worse than those we've hit, so far. (But, I will admit each one gets progressively worse, which is to be expected). In the evenings they have a show - provided there are films, - and they show them on a small screen out of doors. It's not bad at all - particularly here for there's always a wind blowing so there are no mosquitoes to worry with. In the daytime, without the wind it would be unbearably hot - but as it is - in the shade it's very comfortable. At present we are sleeping in tents with regular beds and a mosquito net so not even flys can get to us. All the luxuries!

The natives that work on the post around here are all of the lower class, of course. - It looks just like pictures you've seen. - Up the road where they are building, a string of men carry cement from the mixer to the construction work - in large cans balanced on their heads! - And the other day I saw a man walking down the road in what was unmistakeably a pair of North American - very ~~so~~ vivid multi-colored pajamas! - No less! And some of the trousers they wear - have been patched + patched till even the patches have grown too old to hold additional

patches, so as a result - nothing very much is covered by the pants! Of course - as I said - this is the poorer class - laborers on the fields - We haven't been allowed to go into any of the towns or cities, so try not to judge the places by what I've described. - Having worked at the Union I know of a certainty - there is another class who don't wear patches or pajamas!

Guess I've beat my gums long enough for now, so maybe I'd better end this rambling and see what more mischief I can uncover. - I sorta hope I can spend my Easter on the ground here a loafing, - but have fears to the contrary!

Bye for now and be good.

Love,

Frank.

P.S. - They wouldn't let us prepare our own text for our Easter message - so bear with me. I hope I'm somewhere where I can send Ma a birthday greetings - but if not - let this suffice - Happy Birthday, Ma.

Love again,

F.